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Canada

Poultry and Products

Avian Influenza Prompts Massive Depopulation of British Columbia Poultry

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Report Highlights:
Canada's Minister of Agriculture has ordered the destruction of approximately 19 million head of poultry in British Columbia in an attempt to stop the spread of avian influenza in B.C.'s Fraser Valley, a region that accounts for about 80% of total poultry and egg production in the province.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Ottawa [CA1]
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On April 5, 2004, Bob Speller, Canada's Agriculture Minister, with responsibility for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), announced the depopulation of all commercial poultry flocks and other backyard birds in the Control Area of British Columbia's Fraser Valley in an effort to eradicate avian influenza. Avian influenza was first confirmed by the CFIA on February 19, 2004 and subsequent testing categorized it as the highly pathogenic strain. However, despite efforts by both the CFIA and the B.C. poultry industry to contain the disease, it spread to 18 confirmed locations in the Fraser Valley by early April. As a result, the CFIA determined that an aggressive approach is needed to control the contagious disease. Minister Speller believes that the action is important for the long-term viability of the poultry industry in British Columbia.

Under the plan, all commercial poultry and other birds in captivity within B.C.'s Columbia Fraser Valley Control Area will be depopulated. This represents approximately 19 million birds. However, poultry from non-infected flocks can be processed under normal inspection procedures and made available for sale.

Earlier, the CFIA declared the creation of three major zones which, to varying degrees, control the movement of poultry, poultry products and poultry by-products. There are also varying degrees of testing being conducted in each zone.

The areas are:

- A High Risk Area, 5 km around the first infected farm – where the depopulation of all birds was ordered on March 24th.
- A Surveillance Zone, 10 km around the High Risk Area.
- A Control Area, which encompasses the Fraser Valley.

Impact:

Products from the Fraser Valley and the Lower Mainland represent about 80 per cent of the B.C. poultry industry. Province-wide, B.C. has nearly 600 poultry producers that employ thousands and generate $650 million in annual revenue. B.C.'s share of total Canadian poultry production is approximately 16% for chicken, 11% for turkey and 12 % for eggs. A number of countries already have import restrictions on Canadian poultry (China, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and the Philippines). Recently, the European Commission said its ban was limited to products of British Columbia. Of total Canadian poultry and poultry meat exports during 2003 of $100 million, the Asia Pacific region accounted for about $13 million. The major share of Canadian live poultry and poultry meat exports in 2003 was to the United States ($70 million).

In a related mater, the USDA informed the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) of the complete eradication of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in Gonzales County, Texas on April 1, 2004. All States, Territories, and regions in the United States are free of HPAI. As a result, the temporary import restrictions that Canada placed on imports of live poultry and poultry products from Texas on February 23, 2004 are expected to be lifted in the near future (see CA4016 for background information).

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